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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6799
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 7843
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9667
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RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4155
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001750

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SUBJECT: DRL ASSISTANT SECRETARY KRAMER MEETS WITH
PAKISTAN'S ELECTION COMMISSIONER

REF: ISLAMABAD 1612

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 22, DRL A/S Kramer met with Pakistan's Chief Election Commissioner Farooq to review possible areas of electoral reform on which the U.S. might be able to assist. In response, Farooq announced the recent formation of an Electoral Reforms Commission and noted that the EU Observation Mission's final report focused more on the campaign season than on election day irregularities. Stakeholders should be brought more into the process, he accepted, but he insisted that the ECP was "independent" from political pressures. Farooq felt one of the more important reforms could be the linking of voter cards to the national ID, but recounted previous hurdles in this area. He insisted that the ECP had been and continued to be transparent in the electoral process, making particular use of the ECP website, and heralded the degree to which the recent general elections results had been accepted. End summary.

After the Elections

¶2. (C) Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) Assistant Secretary David Kramer and PolCouns met April 22 with

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Pakistan's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice (retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq and Election Commission (ECP) Secretary Kunwar Muhammad Dilshad. Farooq reported the formation of an Electoral Reforms Committee, chaired by Dilshad, to review and propose changes to electoral laws to the Prime Minister. Farooq said the committee would try to "remove irritants" that were designed to target specific individuals. Farooq also noted that the recently released final report by the EU Election Observation Mission focused more on the campaign season than on election day (reftel).

¶3. (C) In response to Kramer's push for the CEC to be fully independent, Farooq argued that he and his institution were "independent" from political pressures. He pointed to his own security of tenure -- appointed to a three-year term as CEC -- and noted that he could only be removed by a Supreme Judicial Council. The ECP was also financially independent, Farooq claimed, because the institution, as an autonomous agency, had its own line item in the federal budget. Additionally, the ECP had the exclusive authority to set election-related regulations, conduct elections, and appoint

election officials.

Perceptions

¶4. (C) Farooq accepted the possibility that future election commissioners could be appointed in "consultation" with stakeholders. He insisted that President Musharraf attempted just that with his own selection process, though it was not required. But, the ECP had also been disappointed in the past by stakeholders. He recounted that, with the election code of conduct, the ECP had reached out to the 100-plus parties throughout the country, but only received input from two or three.

¶5. (C) Farooq complained that election losers often scapegoated the institution to save face. Addressing the more well-known complaints against him and the ECP, Farooq noted that President Musharraf's re-election had been allowed by the (former) Supreme Court (not by him), that it was still "an unfounded rumor" that the ECP distributed 20,000 blank ballots to Pakistan Muslim League (PML) candidates, and that the Court (not the ECP) ordered the merger of the clean 2007 electoral roll with the corrupted 2002 list.

Voter Rolls; Voter Cards

¶6. (C) Farooq stated that Pakistani law required an annual revision of the voter list; however, this would not encompass a house-to-house survey, as was done last year. Instead, the current roll would be posted for public review, individuals would be able to object to inaccuracies during this review period, and Dilshad's committee would be charged with looking for duplicate names.

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¶7. (C) Farooq also noted that only about 30 million people voted, despite 81 million names on the combined 2007 and 2002 lists. He claimed that millions of voters had been disenfranchised because they did not have proper voter ID cards. Instead of requiring voter cards, Pakistan's national ID cards, issued by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), would suffice, Farooq advocated, but they would have to be issued for free. Even the NADRA cards posed a problem, however, because they list two addresses, where a person is born and where a person (temporarily) lives. Either address could be used for voting. Kramer flagged NADRA as a problem that needed to be addressed.

"Already Started"

¶8. (C) Kramer stressed the importance of transparency, and Farooq outlined few specific items that his institution would need to fix before Pakistan's next elections. "The results have been accepted," he concluded. The political parties were now focused on forming the government, and rightly so, he argued, because there had been "no bias against any political party."

¶9. (C) There was transparency throughout the electoral process, he claimed; "everything is on the ECP website." When challenged that the vote tallies by polling station were still to be posted, Farooq claimed his information technicians were already working on the project. Farooq lamented that, on election day, the ECP had to rely on "borrowed personnel" to serve as polling and returning officers. Lastly, the ECP had "already started" to address election-related complaints by referring them to the respective returning officers.

¶10. (U) This message has been cleared by A/S Kramer.
PATTERSON